The Graduate School

Revisions to University Policies Related to Graduate Assistantships

The Graduate Council approved the following definitions and revisions to the “Graduate Assistantship” section of the University Catalog on December 15, 2015. Approved for inclusion in the 2016-2017 University Catalog by the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs on January 12, 2016.

Graduate Assistantships

A. Assistantships are awarded to selected graduate students by graduate degree programs or other University administrative units in keeping with the definitions below.

B. Applications and supporting documents for graduate assistantships should be submitted to the Dean of the Graduate School for consideration for assistantships in their graduate degree program by March 1 for Fall appointments and by November 1 for Spring appointments. Individual graduate degree programs and administrative units may adhere to different deadlines, and applicants/students are encouraged to contact these entities directly for deadline information.

C. Graduate assistantships are categorized and defined as follows:

**Graduate Teaching Assistants** are salaried student employees (as determined by Human Resources) who receive a tuition waiver and whose job duties consist primarily of direct involvement in classroom or laboratory instruction. The duties are performed under the supervision of faculty. The University also requires that a GTA’s teaching assignment be in his/her own field of study or one that is closely related. Out-of-field appointments require consultation with the student’s graduate program and the approval of Dean of the Graduate School.

**Graduate Research Assistants** are salaried student employees (as determined by Human Resources) who receive a tuition waiver and whose job duties consist of performing research that is in their fields (or a closely related field) of study and is integral to the student’s education. The duties performed are under the direct supervision of faculty or research professionals. The primary duties do not involve classroom instruction. Beyond approval of the Dean of the Graduate School, GRA appointments must be approved by Sponsored Programs Finance Administration and Compliance (for all research/sponsored-program-funded positions) or the Office of Finance and Administration (for state- or foundation/endowment-funded positions).

**Graduate Assistants** are salaried student employees (as determined by Human Resources) who receive a tuition waiver and hold a position that furthers the professional and/or academic development of the student. The duties performed are professional in nature (primary duties must be the performance of work requiring advanced knowledge, defined as work that is predominantly intellectual in character and that includes work requiring the consistent exercise of discretion and judgment) and under the direct supervision of faculty, academic professionals, or administrators. The primary duties do not involve classroom instruction or research integral to the student’s academic degree program, thesis, or dissertation. [Note: Graduate Assistant positions are a distinct category of graduate student support. This category does not include Graduate Research Assistants or Graduate Teaching Assistants.]
D. To qualify for an assistantship, a student must be admitted in regular admission status to a master’s or doctoral graduate degree program.

Students who are admitted to a degree program in conditional status are not considered to be in academic good standing for the purpose of GTA/GRA/GA appointments. Exceptions may be granted by the Graduate Student Appeals Committee.

Students admitted solely to Graduate Certificate programs are not eligible to hold an assistantship.

E. A student who has not earned a degree from an accredited college or university in the United States (or in one of the countries exempted by the Graduate School for purposes of English proficiency admissions requirements) may not be assigned GTA duties requiring oral proficiency until passing an English proficiency test administered by the Department of Modern Languages. If the student does not pass the examination, the enrollment in and passing of the appropriate ESOL course is required prior to appointment as a GTA.

F. Assistantships are generally awarded for the academic year.

Offer letters shall be made using the standardized letter template provided by the Graduate School.

Assistantship appointments are to be made at the outset of each academic year, or semester if not an academic year appointment, using the appropriate Office of Human Resources form.

Assistantship appointments shall be reviewed on a semester basis by the Graduate School to confirm that eligibility and enrollment requirements have been satisfied.

G. During the fall or spring semester, the GTA/GRA/GA must be enrolled as a full-time student in graduate credit hours applicable to the degree.

During the summer session, enrollment shall not be required. Should the GTA/GRA/GA elect to register for classes during the summer session, he or she must be enrolled as a full-time student to be eligible to receive a tuition waiver.

A GTA/GRA/GA who is in the final semester may appeal to the Dean of the Graduate School to enroll in fewer than 9 graduate credit hours applicable to his or her degree and still retain eligibility to hold a GTA/GRA/GA. Requests for this enrollment exemption shall be considered only for master’s students who are pursuing non-thesis degrees and who are not continuing in a doctoral program at UL Lafayette.

Course-load requirements for graduate assistants are given in under General Regulations (next section).

H. Appointment and reappointment of GTA/GRA/GA is contingent upon satisfactory progress toward a graduate degree, as determined by the Graduate School, and acceptable discharge of assistantship duties; an assistantship may be revoked at any time these conditions are not met.

A GTA/GRA/GA must satisfactorily complete a minimum of nine credit hours applicable to the degree each Fall and/or Spring semester.

A GTA/GRA/GA who has earned a graduate degree may not continue in an assistantship appointment after the graduation date unless he or she has just completed a master’s degree and is accepted to a
doctoral program at in the same field or a closely related field at UL Lafayette or is a doctoral graduate who has been accepted into another graduate program at UL Lafayette.

I. Duties and responsibilities of a GTA/GRA/GA are specified by the department or administrative unit to which the student is assigned. An assistantship appointment is limited to 20 service hours per week or generally the equivalent of teaching two lower-division lecture classes.

J. International students who are appointed as a GTA/GRA/GA must abide by work restrictions in compliance with regulations set by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services.

   In the Fall and/or Spring semesters when school is in session, international students may work a maximum of 20 hours per week.

   During the summer session, international students are allowed to work no more than 20 hours per week if enrolled in classes; if not enrolled in classes, they are considered “on holiday” and may work up to 30 hours per week.

   International students may work fulltime during “semester breaks,” which is defined by the University as the period(s) following the Fall or Spring semesters and/or the Summer session beginning the day following the last day of final examinations and ending on the first day of classes for the following academic term.

K. The GTA/GRA/GA may not receive payment for other on-campus employment unless approved by the student’s graduate program and the Dean of the Graduate School. Should an exception be granted, the totality of appointment shall not exceed 25 hours per week during the academic year.

L. In instances approved by the Dean of the Graduate School, a student may be awarded a tuition/fee-waiver-only assistantship with no stipend. With such appointments, all eligibility and enrollment requirements stated above must be met. Such appointments are limited to 10 service hours per week or generally the equivalent of teaching one lower-division lecture course.

M. The Dean of the Graduate School must approve all GTA/GRA/GA appointments.